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Swift, Morrison Isaac

The industrial uprising

[Boston?]

[1895?]

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THE INDUSTRIAL UPRISING.

BY MORRISON I. SWIFT.

THE NEW ENGLAND PETITION TO CONGRESS.

IN some ancient and needy Boston neighborhoods which were last winter disinterred from oblivion for the first time, a singular spirit of local pride came to light. The residents of these localities, although regularly pinched for the every-day necessities, were grieved if a family within their circle appealed to public charity, regretting the inference that they were unwilling to share with their neighbors their limited substance.

It was because the opulent citizens of Boston and Massachusetts gave no indications of being like these honest poor people that a delegation of fifty persons started on foot for the national capital on the 29th of April. The unemployed had been received with slight and contempt by the mayor of Boston, with insults by the state governor, and with laughter and sneers by the legislature; there remained the national government.

The delegation bore these requests:

A PETITION TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS IN BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY.

“This winter the working people of the United States have suffered as never before, although the country's wealth and and supply of food are almost beyond the reach of figures. This shows an economic condition profoundly wrong. But it is only the exaggeration of an evil every year growing more pronounced and dangerous. The rank and file of the work-

ing people of the country, both farmers and artisans, are receiving as wages so small a part of what they produce that they are being degraded, and often they are without the necessities of life. How long do you think the Republic will stand if this injustice continues? The country is already a plutocracy. The wealth power must be curbed and civilized or our days of national happiness and prosperity are numbered.

"We therefore request you:

I. To provide farms and factories where the unemployed now and at all times hereafter may be able to apply their labor productively for the supply of their own wants.

II. To take steps to amend the constitution of the United States so that it shall affirm the right of every one to have work.

III. To abolish interest-bearing bonds.

IV. To furnish immediate employment for the unemployed by beginning the construction of good roads on a large scale throughout the country.

V. To nationalize the Railroads, the Telegraph, and the Mines.

VI. To see that all land not in actual use is thrown open to cultivation by those who are willing to cultivate it.

VII. To establish a commission to investigate the advisability of nationalizing Trusts."

LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES.

Nothing would strike the wayfarer from a land of intelligence with more astonishment than the yawning separation of the elected lawmakers from the mass of the people. There is no passage between them. The lawmaker says, "I am a god and you are a thing of despicable clay. Touch me not, ask me not to think of your low affairs. I am here to surround myself with a plentiful heaven, and the only honer open to you who elected me is to minister with your mean labors to its building." The one thing these divinities have forgotten is to put on their crowns.

We are paying these men solely for robbing us. We know of the Oil Trust, the Cereal Trust, and the Sugar Trust, but worse than all of these amalgamated are the Lawmaking Trusts. The president of the United States is one of those Trusts in his own consolidated person. Supreme and sublime among them is the United States Senate. This Senate is the modern Sodom. It is a den of thieves. It is the capstone of

the great arch of thieves now despoiling and destroying the country. The Lawmaking Trust sustains all the other Trusts and fines them heavily for its service. Just now the Sugar Trust is engineering the Senate. The senators are trust and syndicate magnates, and their senatorship is an adjunct to their syndicateship. They bribe and they accept bribes, delicately, under senatorial disguises, as befits honorable senators.

The second son of Almighty Robbery is the House of Representatives. Then come the younger brothers, the small fry, the State Legislatures, so numerous and small and skilful that their gallows-bird acts could not be enumerated by a college of historians. The Lawmaking Trusts are business monopolies for making their members rich. They care for righteousness and the preservation of the republic according to the ethical code of Satan. Their care is to plunder the republic.

Being fully conscious that these sceptred pickpockets would be greatly shaken by hearing the voice of the people, and fearing lest in the first convulsions of surprise they might telephone for the regular army to forever silence that unwelcome note, a letter was sent to each of the Massachusetts congressmen at Washington to prepare them, and to soften the impending shock. It read as follows:

TO THE UNITED STATES SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF MASSACHUSETTS.

"It is, perhaps, known to you that many worthy citizens of your State have for months been in great want, because no work could be obtained by them. It is not their fault that they have sunk into deplorable dependence upon a slender and unsuccessful charity, which often left the most deserving without any relief. Under these circumstances, an effort was made to arouse the city government and the mayor of Boston to supply public work, but they were wholly indifferent and unresponsive. The winter dragged on, and a vain appeal was made to the governor. Two weeks after, on February 20th, the unemployed visited the State House in such numbers that they were called a riot by the people in charge. They succeeded, however, in getting a petition before the legislature, asking to have immediate public improvements voted to supply work, and praying for permanent measures of relief. Nearly two months have elapsed, and not a particle of extra work has been furnished by the State. There is a prospect that a one-year commission will be constituted to take the unemployed into consideration, and possibly after a few more weeks something in the line of road-building may be hastened.

27 July 1915. E.M.C.

"After this long period of discouragement and disappointment in our own State, we are compelled to appeal to national aid. We propose to send a delegation of unemployed workingmen to Washington, to act in conjunction with those who are now approaching the Capitol from the West for the same purpose.

"Our special design in writing to you at this time is to prepare your mind to deal with these movements intelligently and seriously, and to engage you to use your influence upon the floor of the Senate [or House] to obtain serious and considerate treatment of the subject there.

"There is greater reason for listening respectfully to these men than if they were a deputation of the rich, to whom legislatures now seldom listen disrespectfully. These men represent the many who are in great extremities in a thriving, fertile, and prodigiously opulent country. This is as remarkable as it is ominous. They have the most sacred right to a reception that is dignified and fair, and a hearing that is attentive and friendly. This is one way to soften that animosity which has grown vigorous in the working classes against the rich through perpetual slight and neglect.

"Too strong a protestation cannot be penned on this point. Yesterday, for the first time in this country, the use of the bomb against the millionaire manufacturer was introduced. Shall we open our eyes to what this signifies? One of the speakers at Paterson, where the event took place, tells us what it signifies. 'Rich men,' he said, 'have monopolies. They monopolize gentleness and courtesy. We who work for them are tigers. We will break loose some day, and all the soldiers in the country cannot shoot us down fast enough.'

"Do you think it is well to disregard the most conspicuous warnings of the time? Is there any doubt whether these things are leading? Want is arousing the great working masses from their long slavery lethargy. They cannot stand it any longer. They starve, they are driven to suicide, they commit crime, they break out madly against their oppressors. Is this to be sneered down and stamped out with a more iron tyranny? It cannot be sneered down and stamped out. The determination of freedom is born in the people, and until industrial justice is gained there will be no more repose.

"Will this determination be met by the spirit of justice? It lies in your power in this crisis to influence events that way. It is to urge you to this course, because we want justice to be gained by peace, that we write to you. We are running blindly toward shoals, and it is time to come to our senses. Do we want another war?

"Let us take measures in time to prevent it, and not do all we can to stir it up. In the *Forum* of March a writer says, 'Could people have foreseen how the slavery controversy would end, what frantic efforts would have been made for peaceful abolition!' And yet, he adds, the experience of mankind afforded abundant reason for anticipating this result.

"At the present time we have as ample grounds for serious forebodings. We would have all possibility of a final class war nipped in the bud by legislation in behalf of the working classes, and a new attitude on the part of the law-makers and the wealthy toward them. We could not repeat the mistake which brought on the crisis of '61.

"The approach to Washington of what is called the industrial army gives you an opportunity to initiate this spirit of wisdom and justice. When some take this unusual means to arouse the conscience of the country to their wrongs and misery, walking hundreds of miles to solicit relief, it is an indication of excessive social strain. Let none repeat the fatal error of trying to sneer them down or stamp them out by force. We, who are interested in these problems in Massachusetts, invite you therefore to meet the coming petitioners in a different spirit from that which was accorded to the unemployed here when they went to their own State House and asked for help.

Yours very truly,

MORRISON I. SWIFT,

"Endorsed by the unemployed on Boston Common, Sunday, April 15, 1894."

LETTER TO PRESIDENT CLEVELAND.

When a man is president of the United States in a period of unprecedented working-class woe and gives no evidence of realizing the disturbance, something should be done to recall him to consciousness. This man is Grover Cleveland. He is the leader of the wealthy. He satisfies Wall Street. He is glad to see gold appreciate and men depreciate. He is the abettor of millionaires and the begetter of tramps. He is rich. His wealth gushes in from "sound" financial operations, those robbery operations which the Trust of law-making conspirators makes legal and unpunishable, by its votes. He is by accident a Democrat; a Republican would have served the conspiracy as obsequiously, for Republican and Democrat are opposite entrances to the same working-people's sepulchre.

It is possible that this president of millionaires has been absorbed in the private finances of his circle and does not know

of the collapse of the American working classes. In fairness to him he should be apprised of the evils which agonize the continent. If he does not come out of his private financial trance after the notification he is his own official executioner. A letter appealing to his intelligence, patriotism and manhood was dispatched to him several weeks ago. This is the letter.

"President Cleveland, Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

"At first thought it may seem to the national authorities that the simplest way of dealing with those penniless, unemployed persons, who are pressing their way across the country to the capital, would be to employ some form of "strict and stern repression." This is the opinion of the *Army and Navy Register*, which calls upon you to gather in the regular army to protect yourself, the Congress and the national buildings, against your less fortunate fellow citizens. The custom is an old one of resorting to a liberal use of bullets to check the rising desire of starving persons for food and work. No republic can follow this custom long and live.

"We are sending a delegation to represent the unemployed thousands in New England in these days of calamity. Perhaps nowhere have the poor suffered more excessively and with less extenuation than in Boston. We should be sorry to have our deputation thrown into prison or slain by official edict while exercising their constitutional liberty to petition. It would not increase the public tranquillity, already disturbed by many threatening circumstances.

"The truth is before tranquillity is restored there will have to be a readjustment of the wealth conditions. You may not realize that the case is grave. When have American citizens starved in this manner before? Is there not wealth enough? The national cry is overabundance of wealth. Let us not be children in this matter any longer. Wealth must be better distributed. Will you assist us in establishing the industrial rights of the people?

"One senator takes this occasion to declaim upon the 'dignity and traditions of the United States senate;' to say that this popular manifestation is not American; to charge its supporters with anarchy. If this spirit of bravado is carried into action a wound will be cut in American flesh which will take long to heal. This is no time to prate about senatorial dignity. It is the time for those who make laws to listen to the commands of those who make law-makers. Anarchy! What can compare with the anarchy of

scorning the woes of the people and replying to their determined will: 'You who raised us up to this senatorial eminence come here to influence our actions at the peril of your lives?' Are these senators kings?

"You, as president, can oppose the reckless tendency of such persons to further exasperate the people by treating their representatives with brutality. You can give your support to enactments which look toward a restoration to the people of the wealth which they have been defrauded of by monopoly and privilege. You can endeavor to have the people provided with proper food while in Washington, and granted an opportunity to present their petitions in an orderly body at the capitol building. We who remain at home, as unemployed and their sympathizers, numbering many thousands, will await your action attentively.

MORRISON I. SWIFT.

For the unemployed. Endorsed April 22, 1894."

As is often the case with great men Mr. Cleveland was too busy with affairs of magnitude to attend to the trivial concerns mentioned in this letter. He had on his mind a petition of his own which was more important to him and the nation than a petition relating to the subject of general starvation. In the midst of his monstrous obligations to the Sugar Trust, the Standard Trust and other Trusts, he has found time to petition some Massachusetts commissioners for the privilege to improve his summer home at Buzzard's Bay by damming an adjacent creek. This petition should certainly be granted, for a New York paper betrays that Mrs. Cleveland has been kept from another of her homes by the presence of the camp of the unemployed, who have sought Washington for relief, and that she is suffering hardship. As their third home, the White House, is not a summer home, state or national relief must be granted to the president at once or it will be necessary for him to have a fourth home. Weighed down by these unbearable deprivations it would be surprising if the executive were to find leisure to consider relief for the working classes for such slight infelicities as no homes and no food.

In the next epistle to our Trust preservers at Washington we shall inclose a few hundred items like the following.

"INSANE FROM HUNGER.

CIVIL ENGINEER SCHWARTZ, OUT OF WORK, FOUND STARVING ON THE STREET.

"William Schwartz, a civil engineer, who has been out of work for six months, was found last night by Policeman

McManus of the West One Hundredth street station, starving. He was lying in the doorway of a house at One Hundred and Fourth street and Eighth avenue. He was haggard and too weak to stand. He was taken to Manhattan Hospital. There it was learned that he had lived in a furnished room at No. 628 West Forty-eighth street until ten days ago, when he was turned out. Since that time he had often been seen wandering about Morningside Park. Hunger had made him insane, but he seemed harmless. He was transferred to the insane ward at Bellevue."—New York *World*, May 7, 1894.

BETWEEN TWO MILLSTONES.

Suffering hardship! No public functionary should have less than four homes, furnished at public expense and from the income of those speculations for which he sells out his office. What are the common people for if not to enrich the rich and furnish new homes for public functionaries who already have several? Episcopalian bishop Lawrence is another public functionary, and like president Cleveland he is a child of poverty and public care. He has only three homes, dividing the part of the year when he is not travelling, between Bar Harbor, Cambridge, and Commonwealth Avenue, Boston. While Cleveland is a man of Gold the bishop is a man of god, but they are about equally expensive to the common people. Between earthly and heavenly politics all the juice of the people is squeezed out, and it goes to fertilize the earth for earthy churchlings, sub-emperors Cleveland and Harrison, and Emperor Havemeyer.

The Tariff is a perpetual job. It is the power which runs two millstones which grind the people to powder. Sometimes the Republican millstone is on top, sometimes the Democratic, but always the people are between. Dust and death are the destiny of the people, but they have a beautiful sentiment on the subject. Half of them are happy when they are being ground to death by the Republicans, the other half are only happy when the Democrats are grinding their carcases into profits. These two halves fight each other for the privilege of being ruined and robbed and ground by the party they love. To-day the Democrats have the nation, the Republicans have Massachusetts, the Democrats have Boston, and the working men in nation, state and city have death, death, death. Is Democratic death sweeter than Republican death? Governor Greenhalge promised the working people life and prosperity if they would vote for him; they voted for him and when they

went to the State House asking for the life he had promised he kicked them down the steps.

The workingman knows that his lot is perpetual poverty, but his memory is like writing on water. When one party is in he thinks that his poverty is manufactured by that party and he turns it out; then he turns the other one out because his poverty goes on; but he never turns both out. That would save him, and the politicians and aristo-plutocrats have no idea of having him saved. They bring out some aged and corrupt dispute like the tariff, and that always paralyzes the workingman into party obedience. There is no indication that the tariff will ever be settled and therefore it will be an eternal paralyzer of the working classes and an ever profitable job for the wealth prince and politician.

All winter long, shielded by this huge joke, the tariff, Congress has refused to do anything. Why was it inactive? Because there was not money enough in sight to move it. A few days ago the Sugar Trust oiled the wheels. Then how swiftly they started! There was a pool comprised of Mr. Theodore Havemeyer and "rich senators Moore and Schley." Other senators received sugar tips. Then this august United States Senate, this repository of American honor and senatorial dignity, this shrine of towering traditions, this millionaire swindling society, was ready to act with speed. At all events those members of it on whom the sugar kings had smiled, were. But as this would result in legislation and end the business of tips and speculation the noble senate has no notion of bringing the matter to a climax. Sugar has risen 34 points in thirty days. That was worth millions of dollars to some people, and those millions would come as usual out of the common people. Both sides having long retarded legislation, and one side being now satisfied, the other side continues to retard in order that its avarice may be propitiated. Senator Lodge will have an investigation of the Hunter-Kyle bribery story to bleach the senatorial honor of its spots and to "consume time." These are the very fellows who fooled away months over the silver issue, concerned supremely with its effect upon them, while the prosperity of the country bled to death. They have behaved so basely that it is now a disgrace to be a senator.

Hence it is clear that we have no government. We have a parcel of rich usurpers who have seized what was once government, as a ruffianly gang might fall upon a village and loot it. Some lives are sacrificed but that is incidental to the senatorial profession of nation-looting. For instance we may note an event in New York of May 16th, 1894.

"DARK TRAGEDY IN NEW YORK.

DEED OF A MAN WHO FAILED TO FIND EMPLOYMENT.

Nearly Decapitated his mother with a Razor and then killed himself in the same fashion—Blood everywhere in the miserable tenement where the bodies were found.

"Desperate with the hopelessness which followed a prolonged and fruitless search for work, Charles Samsmuller nearly decapitated his mother with a razor sometime Wednesday night, and then killed himself in the same fashion. . . . They had lived in the tenement for more than nine years. The man was 53 years old, and his mother's age is variously estimated by the neighbors at 80 to 90."

While Mr. Cleveland is fishing and the House and Senate are counting up the year's profits, the people are going insane. It is no wonder that the Rev. George W. Bicknell, of Cambridge, came out plainly and denounced the members of Congress as "dime museum freaks," that he declared, "If it would only have the effect of breaking up the selfishness of Congress, and inducing it to do something for the benefit of the country instead of looking out merely for the political lives of its members, which is derogatory to the welfare of the nation, I would like to see them blown up. If it were not for my Christian principles and the loss of life it would cause, I should like to see about one hundred pounds of dynamite put under the National Capitol and have it blown sky high with the half-dime museum it contains."

If the Congressional Punch and Judies had distributed one hundred tons of dynamite under the country and exploded it, they could not have wrought the loss and death they have already caused by mulcting the nation as if it were their personal estate. What have loss of life and Christian principles been to them? What thought have they paid to the unemployed working classes? Backed by the multi-millionaires they have trampled earth under heel and derided Heaven. Christianity is dead; the rich have killed it. And these assassins of peace and virtue confidently expect the working people who survive the present wreck to send them back to office to concoct another wreck!

OVERTHROW.

One word only applies to Congress and the two arrogant political parties, and that word is **OVERTHROW**. This recreant

Congress and its recreant chief must be swept out, a torrent must be turned through the capitol to cleanse it, and the representatives of Republican greed and Democratic swindle must be landed at their homes, there to enjoy in vegetable repose the spoils of their evil ingenuity against the land.

It is better for working people to vote together than to die together in the insane asylums, or to cut their mothers' throats in the madness of hunger. It is sterner to vote against the capitalist and dislodge him thus than to riot against him wherever industry still breathes, and be sent to prison by his courts under the escort of other workmen in uniform. If he disobeys laws made to tame him, the unified people will provide for the keeping of their laws. There is nothing miraculous about the present tyranny of a few self-made gods, except the miraculous stupidity of the slaves who serve them, the stupidity of the dead working people and the dying middle class. The middle class is like a blind man on the deck of a sinking craft. He is going down serenely. He thinks the lapping of the waves about his feet is some one washing the deck. The sightless middle class cheers for the rich and elects them, as the water creeps up toward its knees. By and by middle and lower class will lie together in a common grave, and their epitaph will be,

They loved their party more than they loved life.

There is a man in Boston worth many thousands who leaves his flourishing business with a good clerk while he travels for pleasure. The clerk receives one thousand dollars a year. The clerk belongs to the middle class, the traveller to the upper. The clerk votes capitalist like an intelligent dog. There is a Boston firm of two men whose annual gains are \$25,000 each, and who hire seventy-five subordinates to do their work. Forty of these subordinates draw salaries of five dollars a week. They belong to the independent middle class and always vote straight capitalist ticket. When the firm needs new help it delays until some good man out of work comes begging for an opportunity and takes him at needy prices.

But if the middle class sticks to its benefactors, living on the leavings of their flesh-pots, the working class can steer the revolution alone. A united vote of workmen is certain. Workingmen may not know on which side their bread is buttered but they know when they have no bread to butter, and they know it hurts. Famine is better than brotherly love as a unifier. Factional quarrels may be fun, but starvation on account of factional quarrels is not fun. The American

Federation people and the Knights of Labor and the unorganized, the Nationalists and Socialists, the Populists and believers in the Single Tax, all belong together in one movement, and their duty is to drain the deadly swamp of Republicanism and Democracy which is breeding material and moral fevers.

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